

# FAYETTE COUNTY STORMWATER ADVISORY COMMITTEE POSITION PAPER

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*At the direction of the Fayette County Board of Commissioners a stakeholders group of citizens from unincorporated Fayette County, Brooks, Tyrone and Woolsey was formed to evaluate the Fayette County Stormwater Management Program (SWMP). This committee's purpose was to provide the Board of Commissioners their perspective and give recommendations regarding implementation of an expanded SWMP to meet future stormwater challenges facing Fayette County. This document summarizes the findings and recommendations of this committee.*

## Committee Creation and Operation

Fayette County stakeholders and volunteer citizens having diverse backgrounds and knowledge participated on the Stormwater Advisory Committee. Committee members are listed below along with the stakeholder group they represent.

Name	Stakeholder Group	Meeting			
		1	2	3	4
Bill Webb	Key Club/Kiwanis/Rivers Alive				
Jeff West	Fayette County Asst. Road Director				
Beth Vaughn	Town of Tyrone - Stormwater				
Virginia Gibbs	Fayette Chamber Of Commerce				
Joe Myers	Citizen/Solicitors Office				
Osvaldo Sanchez	Citizen with Flooding Problems				
Brad Barnard	Builder/Developer				
Dan Langford	Brooks - Mayor				
Don Easterbrook	Citizen/Engineer/Stormwater Director Fayetteville				
Pete Nelms	Fayette County EMS				
Courtney Nolan	Citizen/Engineer				
Craig Gross	Citizen/Extension Agent				
Bob Dixon	Builder/Developer				
Scott Price	Citizen				
Warren Huddleston	Minister of Providence United Methodist Church				
Jerry Young	Pastor Of Fayette Family Church				
Tony Parrott	Director, Fayette County Water System				
Dennis Chase	Environmentalist				
Steve Brown	County Commissioner				
Robert Horgan	County Commissioner				
Don Rehwaldt	Town of Tyrone - Mayor				
Gloria Furr	Town of Tyrone - Town Council				
Richard Newbern	Town of Tyrone - City Manager				

Name	Stakeholder Group	Meeting			
		1	2	3	4
Grace Caldwell	Citizen				
D Barlow	Citizen				
Shana Slay	Citizen				
Dale Phenicie	Citizen				
Tim Thoms	Citizen/State Water Board Advisory Member				
Penny Hunter	Town of Tyrone				
Sharon Boyer*	Fayette Co. Schools				
Lisa Perrett*	Georgia EPD Municipal Stormwater				
Huie Bray*	Brooks/Miniwarehouse				
Gary Laggis*	Woosley - Mayor				
Angela Hinton Fonda*	North Fayette Community Association				
Mike Bell*	M and S Auto Salvage				
Frank James*	Stream Bank Mitigation				

\* - Citizens invited to the committee but unable to attend

In order to accomplish their task of recommending to the Board of Commissioners on how to proceed with an expanded Stormwater Management Program, the committee assessed the current program, recommended goals for an improved program, and assessed funding alternatives to meet these goals.

The following questions were utilized to engage the committee in dialogue to better assess and make recommendations about the future of the Fayette County Stormwater Management program:

- What is Fayette County currently doing in terms of stormwater management?
- What are stormwater related problems, issues, and needs currently faced by Fayette County?
- What extent-of-service and level-of-service should guide the Stormwater Management program?
- What is (are) the best way(s) to pay for these program improvements?
- How should the importance of stormwater management be presented to the general public?

Committee meetings were developed and facilitated by Integrated Science and Engineering who prepared the Stormwater Funding Feasibility Analysis for the county.

### **Current Stormwater Program**

Current funding for the Stormwater Management Program is through the general fund. The county spends approximately \$436,000 annually on the Stormwater Management Program. Funding for administrative, program implementation, permit compliance and customer service are budgeted annually as operating expenses of the Stormwater Management Department.

Complaint-driven operation and maintenance is budgeted within Public Works annual budget. If a problem cannot be corrected from within this budget it is placed on a Stormwater Improvement Project list. Currently there are over 53 Stormwater Improvement Projects.

The committee discussed the root cause for mounting stormwater problems. This is due to lack of adequate resources to perform master planning necessary to provide regular operation and maintenance and replacement of failing infrastructure. Other institutional issues were discussed that included public awareness and education; and water quality management.

Throughout the United States there are two potential primary funding sources for stormwater management programs: general funds or an equitable stormwater user fee (stormwater utility). The committee noted the following advantages and disadvantages of each:

Revenue Source	Advantages	Disadvantages
General Fund	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Generally accepted by the Public as a viable means of funding a stormwater management program</li> <li>• Low administrative cost since billing mechanisms are already in place</li> <li>• Enforcement of payment clearly defined in existing laws</li> <li>• Property tax portion of general fund is deductible on federal or state income tax</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General fund taxes are based on non-stormwater related indicators such as property value, sales tax, etc.</li> <li>• Property tax portion of general fund bills all taxable properties in Fayette County including those in Fayetteville, Peachtree City and Tyrone which do not receive Stormwater Services from the Fayette County government</li> <li>• Tax exempt properties that significantly contribute runoff do not pay property taxes into Stormwater Program increasing burden on other properties</li> <li>• No credits are available to reduce costs to property owner by recognizing efforts to reduce stormwater runoff</li> <li>• General fund revenues are not legally dedicated to stormwater management and must compete with other functions to be adequately funded</li> </ul>

Revenue Source	Advantages	Disadvantages
Stormwater Utility User Fee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distributes costs to all developed parcels (including Tax Exempt) within the service district of the Stormwater Utility only</li> <li>• Equitably distributes costs based on the amount of impervious surface area on the property</li> <li>• Revenues are legally dedicated to stormwater functions only</li> <li>• Credits reduce fee by recognizing property owners' efforts to reduce stormwater runoff</li> <li>• Stable revenue source not subject to property values or sales tax revenue fluctuations</li> <li>• Costs can be divided into monthly, quarterly or annual payments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perceived as a rain tax</li> <li>• Fee is not tax deductible on federal or state income tax like property taxes</li> <li>• Can have a high administrative cost compared to general fund revenue sources</li> <li>• Enforcement of payment can be burdensome if not tied to other utility services</li> </ul>

Under a user fee system, properties are billed based on the amount of impervious (paved areas, roofs, driveways, etc.) area on their property. Impervious area is related to the amount of demand each property puts on the county's drainage system. A user fee was deemed as flexible and intuitively fair, in that those who impact the system the most pay the most. With this system, credits can also be given for detention ponds, open space, landscaped areas and other practices, thus stimulating sound development and maintenance.

### **Stormwater Program Improvement Recommendations**

The committee concluded that the Stormwater Management Program should actively reinvest in stormwater infrastructure for the long-term cost saving benefit to the County. This increased level-of-service should be funded through an equitable dedicated user fee based on impervious area. Revenue from stormwater user fees should be placed in an enterprise fund dedicated mainly to stormwater infrastructure improvements and operations and maintenance.

The committee developed the following recommended action items and activities to achieve the overall goal of improving the Stormwater Management Program.

#### **1. Extent and Level of Service**

Stormwater infrastructure improvements and operations and maintenance should be limited to county-owned properties and right-of-way. All county stormwater drainage system components should be inventoried and inspected every five years. Stormwater Infrastructure within county-owned properties and right-of-way should be replaced, rehabilitated or upgraded based on a ranking system with priority given to public safety concerns.

All privately-owned drainage systems including detention ponds should be maintained by the owner. Unpermitted drainage systems, located on private property that are connected to the

county's system, should be permitted and improved by the property owner, if warranted, to ensure proper function of the public drainage system. If an unmaintained privately owned system negatively impacts the county's drainage system, a fine should be administered. Private inspection and maintenance records should only be required by the county where neglected conditions could impact downstream property or roads.

## **2. Public Involvement and Education**

Education and outreach should become a significant function of the program using effective communication measures such as print and web-based media. While staff currently has a limited outreach program, more resources should be allocated to improve the program.

## **3. Water Quality Management**

Develop an active water quality management program to include a monitoring program to identify and correct problems. The county should also partner with private organizations and/or individuals to correct water quality issues where appropriate.

## **4. Operations and Maintenance**

Complete the inventory of the stormwater drainage system to adequately develop a more proactive approach to maintenance of the stormwater drainage system including a preventative maintenance program.

## **5. Capital Construction**

Systematically plan, design, and construct capital projects to correct functional and capacity problems of the stormwater drainage system as well as replace deteriorated drainage systems that can not be repaired with other methods.

## **6. Administration**

Funding from stormwater user fees for additional staff should be limited to resources needed for an improved operation and maintenance program. A checks and balance system should be established through reauthorization of the stormwater user fee every five years. Prior to this reauthorization, a neutral citizen's advisory committee should provide a recommendation on the matter to the Board of Commissioners. Initial user fees during the first authorization period should range from \$40 to \$60 per typical residential property per year with proportional charges for nonresidential properties.